

Our VOICE

the sparechange magazine



Bob Stollery

*citizen
of the
year*

Jan 2002

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Providing poor men and women with a chance to take control of their lives is the purpose of Our Voice. For seven years now we have given opportunities to more than 2000 people in Edmonton who have found themselves living in poverty.

Our Voice is a project of Bissell Centre and was founded in 1994 to empower people who were homeless or at risk of becoming so, as they work toward gainful employment and self-sufficiency. With more than a seven-year history, the Our Voice organization has gained notoriety for honest news reporting and our unique approach to addressing poverty.

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Our VOICE

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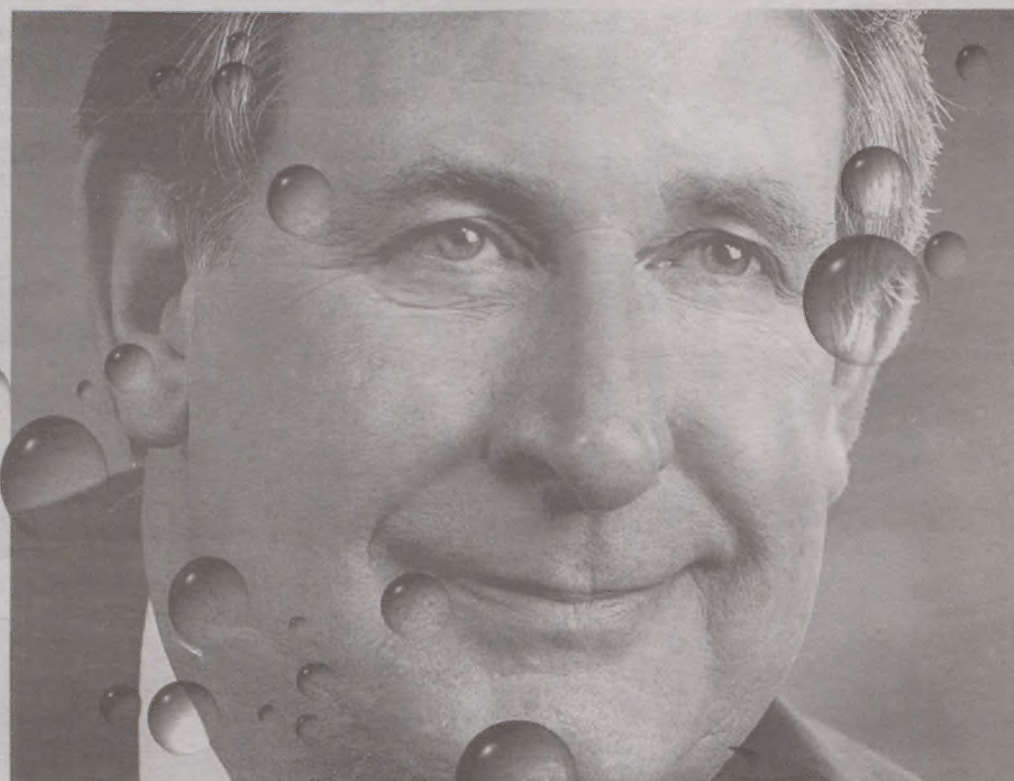
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beyond the tears



Commentary

On Dec. 18th, a tearful Ralph Klein said he
considered resigning because of a pernicious
drinking problem that was affecting his per-
formance as Alberta's premier.

The story he told was the story of a typical alcoholic:
the late nights drinking, the crippling hang-overs, the
denial, the desperate reaching for another bottle.

His confession was hailed by many as a noble act of
contrition. Even the media applauded Klein's candid
confession.

While the admission of a problem is a key step in
overcoming an addiction, the real work of recovery
happens beyond the tears. It is the painful slogging
through vulnerability and denial.

In the inner city, we are keenly aware of the demon-
ic power of addictions. Everyday, endless human sacri-
fices are made to the bottle. Few of the people we meet
have the support necessary to effectively battle their
addictions, let alone the opportunity to rally a commu-
nity around their cause.

Ten years ago another prominent figure made a
public confession about a secret problem. In November
1991, Magic Johnson admitted he had HIV. This was a
shocking admission that changed the way North
Americans looked at AIDS. Up until this point, AIDS
was seen by most people as a gay disease. All of a sud-
den HIV was no longer relegated to the seedy confines
of bath houses and pick-up joints. It was a disease of
the common man. In the United States, the National
AIDS Hotline lit up with 40,000 phone calls on the day

**In Alberta, alcoholism
needs a human face.
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the devil and win." The
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son for the disease and
the thousands who are
ravaged by it.**

of Johnson's announcement, instead of the usual 3,800.
At the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, AIDS-
related calls, which usually averaged 200 per hour,
jumped to 10,000 in a single hour. In addition, shares
of Carter-Wallace, Inc., the maker of Trojan condoms,
went up \$3 when Johnson announced he would become

a spokesperson for safe sex.

What made the event so astonishing was not the
media hype, but the fact that Johnson embraced his
role as a public spokesperson with such relish. He
claimed he never considered trying to hide his diagno-
sis, even though he knew he risked criticism. "It needed
a face to go with the disease," he said. "I spoke for a lot
of people whose voices were not heard."

In Alberta, alcoholism needs a human face. The real
test of Ralph Klein's character is not whether he can
"fight the devil and win." The real test is whether he
can become a spokesperson for the disease and the
thousands who are ravaged by it. In a society where
alcoholics are either considered failures or "the life of
the party" will Ralph Klein help to shatter the common
stereotypes? Or will he simply "lick this thing on his
own" and further reinforce the myth of the rugged indi-
vidualist?

Considering the debacle that preceded his confes-
sion, it is questionable whether he has the character to
meet the challenge. His acknowledgment was prompted
by an incident in the previous week where he allegedly
swore, insulted and threw money at several men in a
homeless shelter.

But maybe Ralph Klein is the perfect man for the
job. Perhaps his behaviour was a cry for help. Maybe
Klein saw his own vulnerabilities reflected in those
homeless men, and in this fertile soil of vulnerability
will grow the empathy of the man.

PIETER DE VOS, JR.

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< jan features >



bob stollery

When Robert Stollery takes your hand in his firm, friendly grip, you know you've met a man you can trust. His hands are a working man's hands, big, capable, no-nonsense hands. And the spirit that emanates from the man is one of decency and down-home goodness. He says things like 'holy malarkey' and 'gosh'; in a world where vulgarity is as common as the additives in our food or the pollution in our air, listening to him talk is almost unbearably refreshing. If Premier Klein is everyman's drinking buddy, Robert Stollery is the man who would pick you up when you'd had too much to drink and drive you home.

On September 26, 2001, Stollery crossed the invisible line separating the rich from the poor by publicly challenging the Provincial government to deal with child poverty in Alberta. His speech to the Laurel Awards Luncheon was reprinted in full the next day in the Edmonton Journal. The response that followed still baffles Stollery.

"I was stunned by the reaction. I had basically given that speech a couple of times before in a modified way—Nobody listened. Nobody cared."

"When I looked down at the mob, gosh, a lot of those people wouldn't know poverty if they stumbled over it. The only thing I can credit it to is September 11th, that people were attuned suddenly to the fact—'my future isn't as secure as I thought it was. Maybe we had better rethink and pay attention to what's going on in the world.'"

"We got 70 to 80 phone calls. There have been 34 articles in various newspapers, some in Toronto."

It also caught the attention of Clint Dunford, the Minister of Human Resources and Employment, the man responsible for SFI rates in Alberta, the man whose department recently completed the Low-Income Review, a study into what, if anything, should be done for low-income people in Alberta. The recommendations of that study have yet to be tabled in the Legislature.

"He called me shortly after and we had coffee and talked for maybe an hour."

That conversation will be followed by a half-day consultation in January, involving Dunford, Stollery, Doug McNally of the Edmonton Community Foundation, and

Bob Westbury, Vice-President of Trans Alta Utilities.

Stollery admits that he's not "naïve enough to think this will change much, but at least we've got people's attention."

"It's frustrating and annoying. When you talk about where the Alberta Advantage is for children living in poverty, the reaction you get from people who should know better is 'why are you talking about this, Stollery—we thought you were a team player?' I've had that happen more than once. Team player, to them, means you play the game. You go along with the government. You pat everyone on the back and tell them what a wonderful job they're doing. If you don't do that you're rocking the boat."

But Robert Stollery is a team player in a much larger sense. His team is all-inclusive and his fundamental philosophy is simple but profound, "Share what you have." His insistence that the government make the Alberta Advantage available to all isn't a random, isolated incident. It is just another expression of the way he has lived his life.

The former president of PCL Construction, the largest construction company in North America, Stollery built his philosophy into his business. When, after 25 years of working for Poole Construction, he bought the company, his commitment to sharing informed his business decisions.

"Always in my work, we've shared. If we had a good year it was shared with all our employees. If we had a very poor year, the executives got very little; the employees still got the same. Ultimately we brought the employees into ownership. I've always believed sharing was real good business. You can only eat three meals a day and you can't take it with you. Sharing brings loyalty."

He relates with pride that PCL Construction is one of the few, if not the only, construction company that is totally employee-owned.

"We had a lot of doomsayers around that, but most of them are out of business now. We've just continued to grow. I started

up owning the company and now I own one-tenth of one percent."

The success of his business has allowed Stollery and his wife of more than 50 years, Shirley, to extend their beneficence beyond the confines of PCL to the community at large. They have donated millions of dollars to numerous worthwhile projects (i.e. \$1.2 million to the U of A for student bursaries, \$5 million to the Edmonton Community Foundation). The Stollery Children's Health Centre was built with their financial support.

Stollery credits his commitment to philanthropy both to his parents, who came to Canada in 1906, and to his experiences during World War II.

"My parents lived in a tent when they first came to Edmonton. They always shared what they had. And the war had a very sobering effect on me. I spent four years in the navy, starting when I was 18. My brother was shot down. I saw a lot of people die. Some of the experiences we had are burned in my memory. I will never, ever forget them. It does have an effect on the kind of person you are. You feel you've been blessed."

In my case by getting out of the war in reasonably good health and in getting to go to University."

Now, at 78, the lack of any sense of mutual responsibility in Canadian culture bothers him a great deal.

"There's a different philosophy in European countries in that you are your brother's keeper—you do look after your parents—it's an old-fashioned sort of approach. It's my responsibility for everyone. Poland has one-third of the child poverty that Canada has. It doesn't make any sense, for God's sake. To so many people, the 80% who are affluent in Alberta, if you don't see them, you don't think about them. It never crosses your mind."

When he speaks about the future and what else might be expected of him, the depth of his personal commitment becomes all the more evident.

"I think it means much more involve-

"It's frustrating and annoying. When you talk about where the Alberta Advantage is for children living in poverty, the reaction you get from people who should know better is 'why are you talking about this, Stollery—we thought you were a team player?'"

CHARACTER **C**

Character consists of what you do on the third and fourth tries.

JAMES A. MICHENER

"We could show the world a stunning example of the Alberta Advantage by shifting our priorities – by making a real frontal attack on poverty of that 20% of Albertans – mainly children – who now live here below the poverty line – show the world we can get poverty down by half or by two-thirds, so we can rival the better conditions of the poorer citizens in European nations, in Australia, Japan, or Poland. Surely all Albertans would be proud to do without a few new buildings, a few highway upgrades, a few school upgrades, in order to show the rest of the world we are in fact different – that we do in fact care about the poor and disadvantaged."

ROBERT STOLLERY

Excerpt from the speech at the Laurel Awards Luncheon, September 26, 2001

ment. Primarily from our point of view it's going to have to be financial. I've got cancer. I've got a pacemaker—so the long-term isn't that great, but you do what you can do. Anything I can do to push with the municipal or provincial or federal government, I'll do that."

He speaks briefly about his experience in the struggle with cancer, of his involvement with a research project that promotes exercise for cancer patients and of the importance of hope.

"It's more psychological than anything. You're doing something. It's funny and I could never understand this, but if you have a major heart condition or diabetes they immediately take you and put you on an exercise program. With cancer, until we started this research project, basically they told you to go home and smell the roses."

The lack of hope that this approach creates in the cancer patient can be compared in Stollery's mind to the lack of hope for people caught in the cycle of poverty.

"I hear so often people saying —'you might want to increase incomes to these poverty-ridden families, but I know a fellow who's never worked in his life. He's a bum.' Then I say to them, 'Does this bum have a family?' — 'Oh yeah, he's got three or four kids.' And I say, 'So you're condemning those kids, because you don't like the father's lifestyle, to perpetuate poverty.' And they don't have an answer to that. It bothers me with the lack of hope for those who are in that poverty cycle."

It is clear there is no need for Stollery to care. He has more than earned the right to rest, to look after himself, to enjoy the remaining years of his life. But it is also clear that as long as he's around he will be challenging others by his actions and words to think about what is truly important.

As we close the interview, he says something that could easily summarize the actions of his life—a life spent building, not just bridges and office towers, but communities and hope. With a boyish grin and a flourish of his hard-working hands, he says, "Mostly, you know, I just like to build things."

NATASHA LAURENCE

letters to the editor



Letters can be mailed to:

- > 10527-97 Street,
- > Edmonton, AB
- > T5H 2H6
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- > Fax: (780) 429-7008

What reality is

I was wondering if it was only the homeless or those facing possible homelessness who are allowed to vend the **Our Voice** newspaper. You see, I have become involved in talking with the homeless and trying to see where the "better way" is. I am a waitress and would probably be considered a low-income earner. I buy food and offer it to the homeless I meet when the opportunity presents itself, and I have no clothes left to donate. But an idea came to me, while thinking about how I wished more could read this newspaper and get a better idea of what reality is. I would like to vend the **Our Voice** newspaper in some of my spare time, and with the money that I earn I could donate more food to the shelters, the soup kitchens, and purchase blankets and clothing to donate, while increasing the distribution of the **Our Voice** Newspaper.

Please let me know as it is with a sincere desire to do the most that I can do.

BRENDA DURANT

"I don't write polite letters. I don't like to bargain. I like to fight."

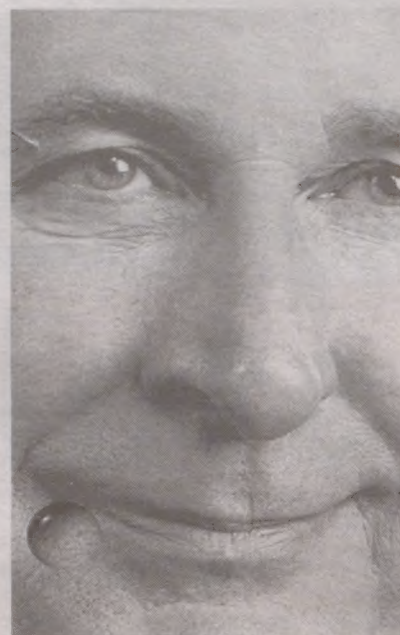
ROY M COHN

The 1% Solution

He's makin a list
He's checkin it twice,
"Gonna find out Ralph's naughty,
Not Nice
Santa Claus is coming to town..."

Now Ol' Jake doesn't have a problem with the Premier having a beer or two, but I really think a man in his position oughta just go home instead of trying to hang out with the boys at the Jamieson Centre.

His little act of largesse probably got misunderstood because the boys didn't quite realize that Ralph was so much behind the concept of sending 1% of the provincial budget to the city coffers for affordable housing that he was moved to personally lead the way—donating 1% of his pocket change to those less fortunate than himself. I'm just wondering how he wrote it up on his expense account??



All I know, is he got a few people just a little ticked with him—maybe because they didn't get in on the action, or maybe because it's bad enough to be homeless without having your privacy invaded by some guy in a suit who doesn't know when it's time to call a cab and go home. Maybe the fact that the home he's going to has a light bill that's higher than the amount of cash he shelled out to share the pleasure of their company, and the taxpayers are shelling out for that too.

Let's see now regular beer is 4.5%, hi-test is 5.5%, impaired is over .08%. The budget needs 1%. Ol' Ralph probably just got a little confused and ended up at the Herb instead of the Spady which is where you're sposed to go when you've had a bit too much. Maybe he should stick to the .05% beer and leave the heavy thinkin' to someone else. At least until his head clears!!

JAKE

29 Homeless Deaths 29 Too Many

Santa Cruz participates in the National Day of Remembrance and the reading of the names of the homeless people who have died in the past year by Becky Johnson Santa Cruz, Ca. — A rare break between rain storms allowed an outdoor gathering at the Homeless Services Center without ponchos and umbrellas. The event, though sunny, was far from this season's holiday cheer — The annual event of reading the names of those who died while they were homeless, led by Homeless Services Center Executive Director Ken Cole.

The Homeless Persons Health Project documented homeless deaths throughout the year, and provided additional data on the deaths. There were fewer than last year. 26 officially, but the names of three more were added in making the list for this past year of 29 deaths. 29 people whose lives were filled with fear, lack of privacy, lack of sleep, cold, often hungry, and treated like refuse. 29 people whose shelter emergency is over forever. 29 more homeless people the merchants and the westsiders living in \$500,000 homes won't have to look at anymore.

Two were in there '80s. One woman was 86. That an 86-yr-old woman should have to live on the streets homeless is shocking in itself. Surely in a country as rich and powerful as America, and in a City as smugly elite and as wealthy as Santa Cruz is, surely we would not allow an elderly woman to spend her last dying days out on our streets? But there it was. The name was read, the age was read. She's gone forever. Our shame will be with us forever as well.

Ten were confirmed deaths out of doors or in a vehicle. Twelve died in some sort of medical facility so that, at least, they were able to lie in a bed at the end. Only one was taken in by someone who cared so they

We, as a society, must pay for housing for all of our elderly. We, as a society, must pay for housing for anyone who is in the final stages of the ravages of disease, so they can have proper nursing care during their last days. We, as a society must pay for housing for anyone who is so disabled they cannot work. We, as a society must pay for the drug and rehabilitation facilities to aid addicted people to clean up. They can't clean up while still on the street or its very likely they will relapse.

were able to die in a private home where they had a little chance to do it in dignity and privacy. One died in jail.

Homeless deaths are predominantly male and this year was no exception. But 26% were women. A total of 7 women died homeless in Santa Cruz County this year. Acute drug overdose remained the biggest single cause of death: 7 Heroin is rampant in Santa Cruz and the swath it is cutting through the population is truly frightening. Heroin is a very good pain killer. When you are homeless, you are in pain a lot. It almost seems like the natural thing to do for awhile. A chance to step out of the pain, the fear, and the stress of being homeless that just runs you down and makes you just hurt all the time. Heroin is like a little vacation from it all. Nothing hurts.

One death was a suicide. Why should they think its going to end? We don't even have a way for a homeless person who is really trying to end their homelessness to be able to do so. Why should they go on living? What do they have to look forward to?

One death was a homicide. Did you read about it in the paper? Me neither. Usually the homicide angle is enough for reporters to play up the sensational angle of a story. But you're expected to die when you're homeless. Its so normal its not news, even when its murder. In fact, we can even blame it on the homeless. Don't they know how dangerous it is to live out of doors? What ever were they thinking deciding to move under a bridge to live? Too cheap to pay rent?

The causes of death, in descending order were Acute Overdose -7 Cancer-5 Trauma -3 Liver disease-2 Stroke-2 Infection-2 GI bleeding -1 Homicide -1 Suicide-1 unknown-1.

We had no homeless deaths under age twenty-one. Most deaths were in the 31 - 50

age range.

Mayor Christopher Krohn and his mother attended the ceremony and read a prepared statement. They left quickly, even before the reading of the names. No other member of the Santa Cruz City Council attended. Last year, 41 names were read. The year before it was 19.

The overdoses, homicides, and suicides are all preventable causes of death. This year we had 9 preventable deaths, for which if services had been adequate to their needs, they might still be alive.

When does the crisis of homelessness just in itself trigger for us, as a society, to act to end that emergency. Just as the Red Cross refused to come to the aid of Camp Paradise when the flood waters were rising and washing out their meager homes, we are failing to respond to the crisis these 29 people had on our very doorstep.

We, as a society, must pay for housing for all of our elderly. We, as a society, must pay for housing for anyone who is in the final stages of the ravages of disease, so they can have proper nursing care during their last days. We, as a society must pay for housing for anyone who is so disabled they cannot work. We, as a society must pay for the drug and rehabilitation facilities to aid addicted people to clean up. They can't clean up while still on the street or its very likely they will relapse.

Why hasn't the Santa Cruz County Department of Health declared a public health emergency caused by homelessness? We have more than enough statistical evidence to declare one. If it were deaths from Anthrax poisoning we would get excited. We would do something.

BECKY JOHNSON

[1]

We are the snake charmers who never get bitten. We entertain fantasies yet think we're immune to the powers of seduction. In dingy bars and posh casinos, we chase the future and drown the past. We open our wallets and slip our savings into slot machines. Each of us has our own rituals; each of us is convinced the odds are on our side: "This time, there'll be a payout. I'm betting bells on the corners!" We play until we lose our houses, our families, ourselves. We are the victims of a dream.

North American society is driven by illusions. In the sixties, the Hippies thought liberal doses of love and THC would change the world. In the nineties, Gen-X'ers believed that the Internet and Prozac would save us all. As soon as one illusion is shattered, another replaces it. It is the nature of our optimism.

A dominant illusion is that we can harness the future through information. We are consummate gamblers, scouring newspapers and cyberspace for tips to hedge our bets. Our lives are dependent on projections—estimations of growth and collapse. We are in constant contact with the indicators of our success: the trends, the margins. We are naked without numbers.

We are devourers of the news. We are always searching for history's loose thread—always looking for things to unravel. Modern history is defined by the progressive loss of our innocence: Vietnam, HIV, the hole in the ozone layer. Every year, another veil is removed to reveal what lies beneath. We are beginning to see the blemishes on the dancing girl's face.

[2]

THE YEAR 2001 WAS A WASTELAND OF INNOCENCE. An early victim was the Internet. For the past five years, Wall Street had been the greatest casino on earth. This was the mythical Las Vegas—a place that grew out of the desert; a place where money was fashioned from thin air. Then the Nasdaq crashed and all those fortunes disappeared.

Even the Internet stalwart *Yahoo!*, once worth \$134 billion, fell to a value of less than \$10 billion. The rebel yell had been reduced to a pathetic whimper.

[3]

ON JUNE 11TH, TIMOTHY McVEIGH DIED AT THE Federal Penitentiary in Terre Haute, Indiana. Federal officials declared the man responsible for the worst act of domestic terrorism in U.S. history dead by lethal injection at 7:14 a.m. He made no verbal statement. His last words were handwritten on a piece of paper:

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll
I am the master of my fate;
I am the captain of my soul.

He offered no apology for an act that claimed the lives of 168 people and wound-

ed hundreds more. His only explanation was that he had killed out of patriotism.

Up until his execution, a fervent illusion arose that if we could only see the mass murderer in his final moments, then something cathartic and righteous would occur.

Months earlier, David Marshlack, president of Entertainment Network, Inc. petitioned to have the execution broadcast on EntertainmentNetwork.com at a mere \$1.95 per computer. On April 19, a federal judge ruled against him.

In the end, 10 witnesses joined a few members of the press to watch McVeigh die. The execution was shown live via closed-circuit television to several hundred survivors and victims' family members gathered in Oklahoma City. The transmission was carefully monitored in an attempt to prevent entrepreneurs from hijacking the signal. In the digital age, even death is for sale.

Despite the setback for voyeurism, the world was aware of McVeigh's death moments after the deadly stream of drugs coursed through a needle in his right leg. His crime was recapitulated, his final acts catalogued, and the mechanics of his end detailed (an MSNBC 3-D graphic took viewers on a God's-eye tour of the death chamber, complete with a little digital lethal-injection chair).

In the digital age, voyeurism replaces actual engagement. For us, seeing is believing.

[4]

FRIDAY, NOV. 22, 1963: THE PRESIDENTIAL motorcade travelled down the slope in front of the book depository at the northwest corner of Houston and Elm. On location was a Dallas dress manufacturer and Kennedy-buff by the name of Abraham Zapruder. With a hand-held camera, he recorded the limousine's transit through Dealey Plaza. It was 12:30 pm when the shots rang out.

The event was captured on 26 seconds of Kodachrome II film whirling away in Zapruder's camera. *Frame 230*—Kennedy is shot. He slumps to his left as if seeking solace in his wife's bosom. *Frame 313*—the right side of his head explodes in a red flash. Jackie scrambles onto the wide trunk of the Lincoln convertible and extends her hand to Secret Service Agent Clint Hill who has jumped onto the bumper. Governor Connally sags down in his seat.

This 26-second depiction of death changed the way we look at life. The images themselves—the waving president and first lady, Kennedy's grab at his throat, the puff of red, Jackie's desperate lunge across the back of the limo—are seared into our collective memory.

This was the decisive moment—the moment where everything changed. In this instant, history became theatre.

Today, the theatrical productions continue as we watch breathlessly for the next episode of such melodramas as: Clarence Thomas-Anita Hill, Oklahoma City, Columbine, O.J. Simpson, Clinton-Lewinsky, Diana's death, Elian Gonzalez and September 11th.

[5]

IF YOU DRIVE DOWN INTERSTATE 270 IN MARYLAND from Bethesda to Gainersburg, you enter "DNA-alley"—the world's largest collection of genomic firms and research centres. It is on this 24 km stretch of American soil that researchers from the publicly-funded Human Genome Project competed with scientists from the private company Celera Genomics to decode the human genome.

In June 2000, the two rivals announced they had successfully mapped our entire genetic code.



Photo: Carolina Salguero

A year-and-a-half after this discovery, researchers from Advanced Cell Technologies in Massachusetts announced they had cloned the world's first human embryo.

In the modern age, neither the "Book of Life" nor life itself is sacrosanct. Ethics are discarded in the head-long rush for knowledge because, as Celera's corporate slogan says, "Discovery can't wait." In the modern age, we control the future through information.

[6]

ON SEPTEMBER 11TH AT 8:45 AM, THE FIRST OF four airplanes struck the heart of America. At first, it appeared to be an accident—a failure of man or machine—but then the second plane hit, tearing into the World Trade Centre.

The terrorist acts occurred with cinematic precision. The first plane hit the north tower setting the upper floors ablaze. This was the seduction. It was meant to get our attention, to bring the hungry eyes of the media to the scene so that they could capture the second strike. The scene was surreal: the rain of metal, glass and human flesh; the people jumping; a man leaping head-first; a couple plummeting hand-in-hand.

Watching the macabre scene, we found ourselves reeling to make sense of it. We were looking for frames of reference. As the towers fell we thought we were watching a Hollywood production. We thought immediately of Orson Welles. Life imitated art. There was a terrible beauty in the graceful collapse of those towers—the way in which pieces of metal and concrete cascaded to the city below.

And then in the wake of this chaos, the letters started arriving, laced with a name that evoked terror: *anthrax*.

The terrorist acts of September 11th attacked our symbols of economic and military power and whenever our symbols are

threatened, we grasp desperately for control. We cannot lose them for fear of losing ourselves. If the economy falters, the terrorists win. If we disrupt the rhythm of our lives, however pathological, the terrorists win. Consumerism is conflated with freedom. The freedom to spend is the freedom to live.

[7]

ON SEPTEMBER 12TH, THE NASDAQ STOCK Market, Inc., offered the following statement on the possible collapse of its New York headquarters at One Liberty Plaza as a result of the previous day's terrorist attack:

At present, we have no evidence that the building will collapse, but want to provide some perspective on what such an event would mean.

While unfortunate, the collapse would have no impact on the reopening of Nasdaq when the U.S. markets open in the next several days. With primary and back-up data centers located outside of New York City, the ability to operate the Nasdaq market would be unaffected by the loss of the building.

No mention was made of the over 5000 people who were believed to have perished the day before. In the global economy, consumer confidence is more important than human lives.

[8]

ON DECEMBER 8TH, EDMONTON POLICE FOUND Vivian Rose Paddy dead on the back steps of Alex Taylor School. Clothing items were strewn around her body. A pair of pants was found hanging over a staircase handrail.

Little is known about Vivian's life. According to staff at an inner-city agency that she frequented, she was an angry woman. She once said of herself: "I'm a tough bitch. I don't cry!"

In the modern world, we build walls against emotion. In the modern world, we deny our vulnerability.

PIETER DE VOS, JR.

EDITORIAL E

"The trenchant editorials plus the keen rivalry natural to extremely partisan papers made it necessary for the editors to be expert pugilists and duelists as well as journalists. An editor made no assertion that he could not defend with fists or firearms."

FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
(1935-1943)

"I heard that **Commentary** and **Dissent** had merged and formed **Dysentery**."

WOODY ALLEN



Cow pies

I spent Sunday night, December 9th, camping out at Anne McLellan's office with a group of young demonstrators. I was invited as an advocacy journalist. We were protesting McLellan's anti-terrorism legislation. Three bills, C-32, 36, and 40 threaten citizens' privacy, personal security, rights to free assembly, the right to strike for better working conditions and rights to legitimate protest activities. On Monday morning I watched as Anne's office manager tried to negotiate an arrangement that

would allow the protesters to continue their demonstration and also allow the office to continue functioning.

By now it was clear to me the protesters were there for provocation not negotiation. Later that evening, protesters who refused to leave were taken to jail and charged with trespassing. None of the young people were terrorists. They were idealistic young people with good intentions, good educations and strong principles. Unfortunately, they appeared to be short on common sense and simple courtesy. An elderly man struggled to negotiate the crowd and a floor strewn with backpacks and gear. Nobody helped him.



A penny saved

We have all heard the adage: "a penny saved is a penny earned" and "Take care of the pennies and the dollars will take care of themselves." Maybe you've also heard the anonymous little rhyme "See a penny, pick it up. All that day you'll have good luck. See a penny, let it lie, and your luck will pass you by"

Lately they've been showing up at my vending locations, and I've been watching them to see what's happening. How they get there is a mystery. Maybe they're the ones that have gone missing from the G.S.T. (Did you know that if what you buy is over a dollar the retailer collects 7 cents, but if it's less, he only takes six?) Maybe that's where they come from.

Warm, lazy summer Sunday morning...two pennies on the ground in front of me, one about two steps away, and the

other about a car's length into the parking lot. An elderly couple gets out of their car...slowly approaching...I wait expectantly. I hold the door open for them, greet them with a friendly smile...a respectful greeting. My somewhat scruffy appearance contrasts sharply with their neat, well-groomed look...I feel abashed, they seem to take no notice of that...friendly smiles and thank-you from both.

They came out about an hour later. The man picks up the penny closest to me, obviously with great effort, and hands it to me with a warm smile and "Keep this. It may bring you good luck." I thank him and tuck it away. His sincerity makes it a real gift...I feel warm all over...so lucky to have met these people...It's so good to see two people so much in love after so many years of being together. He picks up the other penny...presses it into her open palm, entwines his fingers with hers...they stroll back to their car...like two teens in love.

Their endearments are as great a gift to me as the way the penny comes to me...total strangers though they are...a long time passes as they sit in their car...just talking.

I hurry into the shop, grab a coffee...a table... my notebook, in that order. I rush to scribble it all down...half-fearful I would lose the glow within...a tap on my shoulder. Six dollars appear on my table...young lady says she's seen me outside and now she wants to buy me lunch. "Thank-you and God bless you," I say.

bbqing the holy heifer

Protesters were making it impossible for the office to function.

This situation revolves around respect. McLellan's office is public space, paid for by taxpayers such as the elderly gentleman. It is not public space outside of business hours. Trying to protest possible violations of privacy and security by performing actions that in themselves violate privacy and security is not an effective way of doing things. If anything the protesters' actions could be used to support the argument that these bills are needed to protect Government services from further disruption.

I work out of the Bissell Centre, a front line inner-city social agency. I write for and sell **Our Voice**, the spare change magazine. **Our Voice** hears stories of how rough Edmonton police can be with people who have no social support mechanisms. Come and visit our downstairs drop-in. Many people will show you the cuts and bruises they say were caused by police. Police already have enough power. I don't want to see legal support for paramilitary force against citizens engaged in acts of legitimate protest such as happened in Quebec City. I do not think the action in Anne McLellan's office offers an argument for reduction of police power.

The treatment of the media by the protesters also bothered me. The presence of journalists kept the police at bay and

allowed the protesters to mount their media circus...complete with hot tub. Yet the protesters did not always treat the media with respect or courtesy. On Monday morning the group left video reporters from three TV stations and a Sun photojournalist out in the cold until their equipment froze up. This is not the way to get supportive coverage.

Protestors have a very important job to do. We need protesters like the university students at the sit-in who are well informed, logged on and have economic support systems. We need them to protect the rights of the

Holy Cow! Batman

working poor, most of whom are far too busy scraping together enough money to survive to go to demonstrations. We need them to stand up for people like the Candy Man, a three-year-old in a forty-year-old body, who panhandles change for chocolate bars on Whyte Avenue. He's shoeless in summer, coatless in winter. We need them to protect children who are shuffled through an endless stream of foster homes. We need them to protect all the public systems that were put in place with hard work and at great expense to protect individuals such as these few examples and many more. We need activists to protest effectively. We do not need protesters to violate the standards they are trying to protect.

Come on kids, let's do it better next time.

THERESA MCBRYAN

the street goods

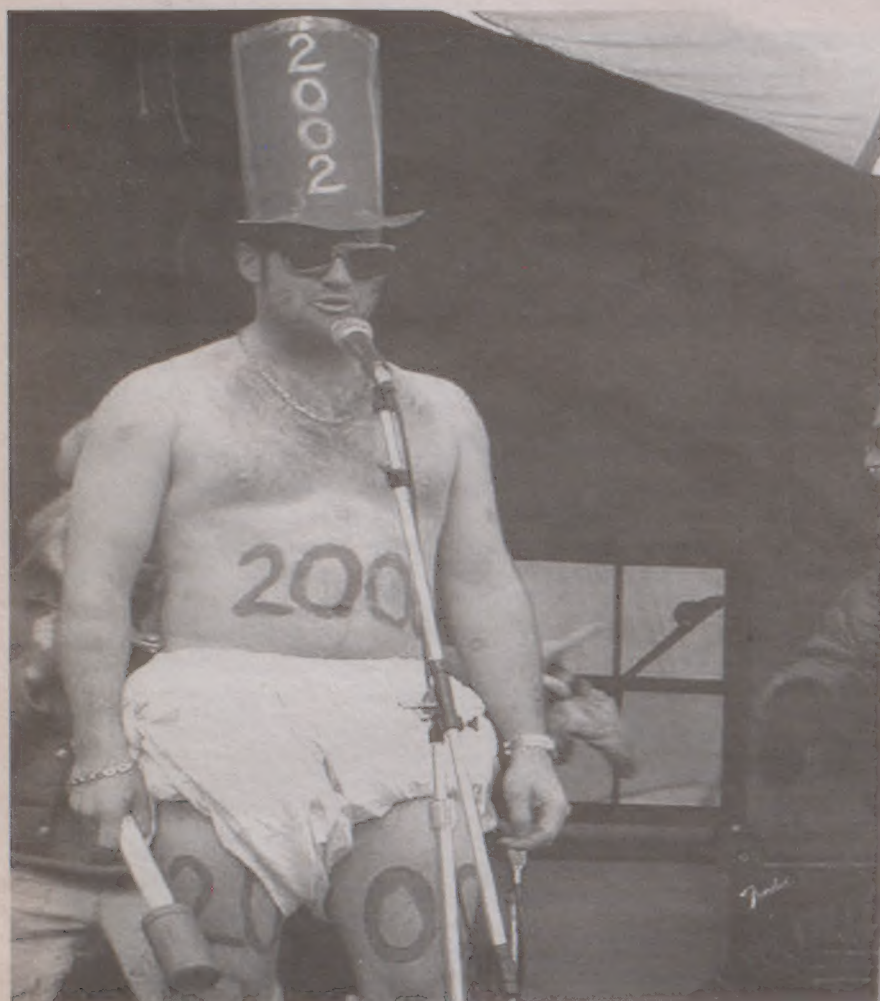
Moments later, a tooney appears in the hand of a young man. "Can I buy a paper from you?" I hand him one and pick up my pen...a gray haired gentleman passes a paper back with a smile. "I've read it all the way through...sell it to someone else now."

Back outside... Two businessmen... Smiles, handshakes, quick sale. I am overwhelmed at such quick success, a little bewildered. Bursting to tell the story, I interrupt their visit...they are a little taken aback but listen politely. Then they tell me they always donate pennies at the cash register. The little box has sent thousands of kids to summer camps. Where do they go after the first miracle? Can we track it? Who knows...mine still continues.

JAKE FRIEDMAN

If you have a favorite lucky penny story, I'd love to get your two cents worth. My email address is friedman_jake@hotmail.com I have this idea..."

The man picks up the penny closest to me, obviously with great effort, and hands it to me with a warm smile and "Keep this. It may bring you good luck". I thank him and tuck it away. His sincerity makes it a real gift.



planning for the New Year

slow panic at the thought of being trapped in a workplace for eight hours a day. I was in treatment for post traumatic stress syndrome, and burned out from my last job that ended in 1992. I was tired all of the

time. When a friend came over to take me out for dinner, I became furious. The thought of getting dressed and going out was just too daunting. Delivery food was more my speed.

Writing a plan seemed safe enough. It wasn't like a resolution. If it didn't work, maybe God had other ideas. I wrote down that I wanted a job, but added conditions. It had to be in ministry, or writing or at least something I enjoyed doing. I wasn't going back into the school system or to work with the mentally challenged ever again.

The next thing I wanted to see in 1995 was a computer so I could write more efficiently.

Debbie never did mail the letters to the American evangelist, but God read them anyway. I guess since he is omnipresent, He can read a letter here as well as on the prayer wall. He not only read the letters, the visions happened.

Debbie moved to Grande Prairie in April, and that September she got married. By the end of the year, she and her husband

had moved into their own home. I was glad to see her stuff moved from the kitchen, too.

I got my computer in the fall, a donation from the Bissell Centre, but I didn't get my job until December 6. Pastor Laurie

LaFleur from The Mustard Seed came over to see me at the mission where I was holding a Sunday service. He said they were hiring ACE grant workers at The Mustard Seed. ACE grants were given to non-profit organizations to pay wages to hire people on welfare for a period of six months. After that, we qualified for Employment Insurance.

I took over a resume, and within days was working as an "outreach worker". The best part of the job was that I was only confined to the workplace for 20 hours

a week doing intakes in the food bank. The rest of the time, I was able to work out in the community. My visions had come to pass.

Since then, I make plans every year. Even the plans that don't work out or take longer are important in keeping me on track, so for the coming year, I am once again evaluating my life and making up a vision.

LINDA DUMONT

PERSPECTIVE P

"From the lowly perspective of a dog's eyes, everyone looks short."

CHINESE PROVERB

I don't make New Year's Resolutions, because once a resolution is made, like a promise, it has to be kept. Instead, I make plans and set goals for the coming year. These plans can be altered or modified, or even scrapped if they prove impractical or things change. Sometimes, too, they take more than a year to achieve.

I started making plans in 1995. It was late January, and Debbie, a homeless friend, was camped out at my house. She came with a lot of stuff - too much to take to a women's shelter - that we piled along one wall of the kitchen and draped with blankets. About a week after her arrival, I walked in to find her excited about the vision she was writing for the year.

"I'm mailing it to John Evazini and he's going to put it up on his prayer wall and make it come true," she said.

I looked at her vision. It was a pretty

bold vision. She was going to marry the guy she'd been seeing for the past few years, and God was going to give them a house. They were both unemployed and homeless at the time, and he was still trying to reconcile with his estranged ex-wife.

I told her I'd write up a vision, too, and she could mail them in together.

I couldn't hope for anything extravagant and I had to think for quite awhile to come up with a "vision". Changing the word vision to plan helped some. But what did I hope to see happen by the next year? I already had a husband, so God probably wouldn't get me another. I could ask for improvements on the old model, but that would be interfering with his free will. One big change I wanted was to get off welfare. I had been on and off social assistance for five years. It sounded simple, but really wasn't. It meant working, and I went into a

Our Great City of Wealth

As we go on with life there are people out there who don't have the luxuries some of us have. There are a lot of people who are struggling everyday trying to live. The homeless epidemic has gotten out of hand and it is up to us to change that. There are many families barely making it from day to day and all they want is a place to call home. Some have no home to speak of and all they do is live from one family to another.

Or the guy who came here from a different province to look for work. He probably didn't know we have 1% housing in this great city or not enough places to sleep at night. It seems that our great city is more worried about its image than the poor. There isn't enough housing for people. That in itself should tell you something. They brought the games here and that was good for the city, but it didn't put food on the

poor people's table. All it did was make the city look good and they can say we don't have a problem with poverty. The games are over and winter has set in and it is going to be a harsh one.

I heard on the radio that they found a person frozen to death and it won't be the last. Poverty is an ugly word and I want to know why we have it in a city full of different cultures and values. I thought we were supposed to take care of our fellowman and be as one. Ever since those words were spoken we have forgotten them and that is a shame to this great city of ours.

There should be a zero rate of people on welfare or panhandling. That dream will never be reached and now it is up to the people to make changes. We must fight poverty and help out any way we can. There are a lot of homeless people out there with addictions or mental problems. They are the ones that need help the most. There are families with no place to call home. They need help. For every person we help there are many more out there seeking the same thing. I know we can't help everyone but we can make a difference and we would be rewarded at the end. The rewards we receive are a word of thanks and, if you look into their eyes, they say a lot more.

LEN BLACKFOX MARTIAL

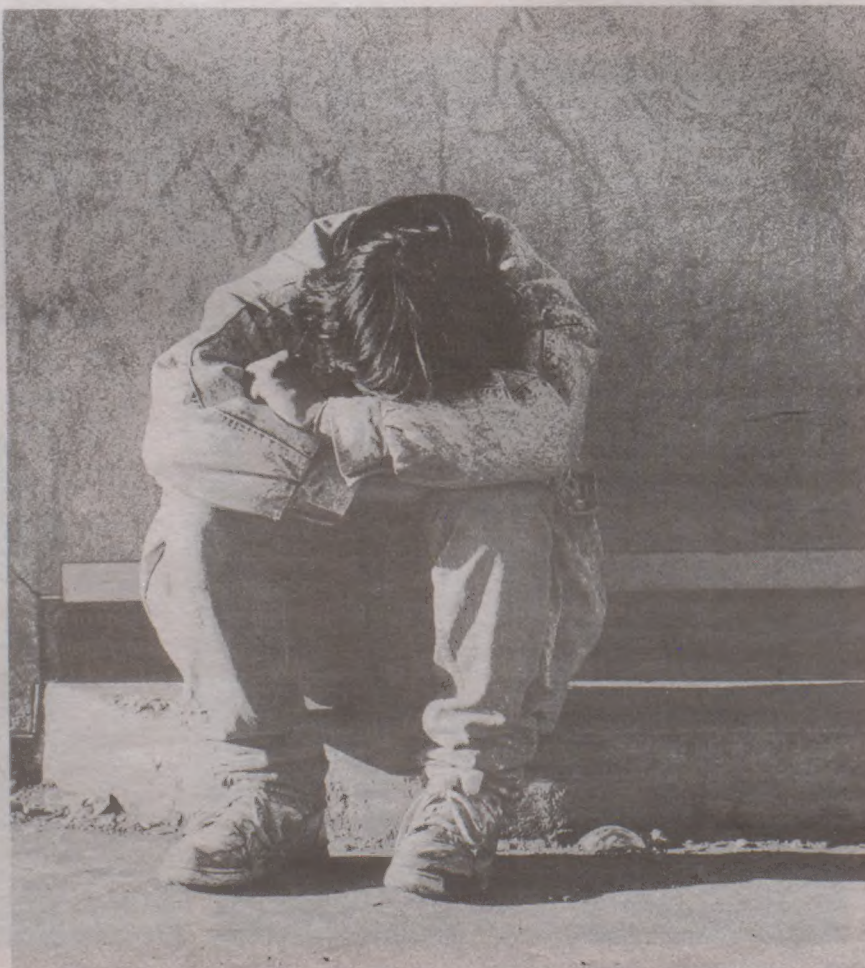


Photo: PF de Vos, JI

P PROTEST

"Protest, evasion, merry distrust, and a delight in mockery are symptoms of health: everything unconditional belongs in pathology."

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

Photos: PF de Vos, Jr.



Images: Sit-in at Anne McLellan's Constituency Office, Dec. 12/13th

Len Douziech, in the course of less than two years, has become one of the most recognizable faces at demonstrations, conferences and meetings of activist groups in Edmonton. Len is the head of the local chapter of The Council of Canadians. If there is a table at a gathering, he is there with twenty pounds of books, pamphlets, petitions and information. He brings an irresistibly positive energy to any gathering. I began to wonder, watching him, where all that ardor came from.

Len was awakened by a book: *Clear Answers*, by Kevin 'Iaft. Prior to reading this book Len, who on one occasion described himself as a "former right-wing lemming" believed that public services could be better performed by the private sector. Upon reading this book he suddenly realized that a private health care system would rob fees from a public system and force user fees for the remaining users of the public system upwards. Almost before he knew it Len was at the Agricom during the Bill 11 protest, buttonholing people and and telling them:

The Art of the Protest

"You have to read this book."

When I first met Len he was handing out Council of Canadians literature, asking people to ask intelligent questions about what kind of government they wanted before the last Federal election. By the end of the weekend he had four or five *Our Voice* venders (myself included) handing out literature. When Friends of Medicare staged its demonstrations at the Legislature, he was there, with literature. When activists journeyed to Quebec City, he was with them.

Len has realized far earlier than most people in the middle class that some things can be treated as commodities and some cannot. He wanted to share this insight and get information into the media. Len is unusual in the activist community in arriving at his understanding from an intellectual process. During a career that included work as a manager for Environmental Services in St. Albert his own situation was pretty secure. Many people in the activist community have already been injured by the system or have been frustrated by being unable to find a meaningful niche for themselves in their community. What makes Len different is his attitude. He is not looking for something from the activist community—he is trying to give something.

Len does this with such spontaneity, directness and good-natured enthusiasm that he stands out in groups that sometimes tend to self-absorption, and insularity, and who use their collective personal anger to create guilt. I asked Len what he gets out of this. He told me a sense of righteousness and also the knowledge that when his son asks him "Where were you when all this was going down," he will be able to say he was out there, doing the right thing.

Doing the right thing recently gained him a night in jail, in the company of protestors from December's siege of Justice Minister McLellan's office. He described the strip search as humiliating, (in more graphic detail than I really wanted to know). Then he described how he and fellow protestors worked through feelings of denial and self-blame to become cheerful and noisy, passing messages down the jail cell rows from one cell to another.

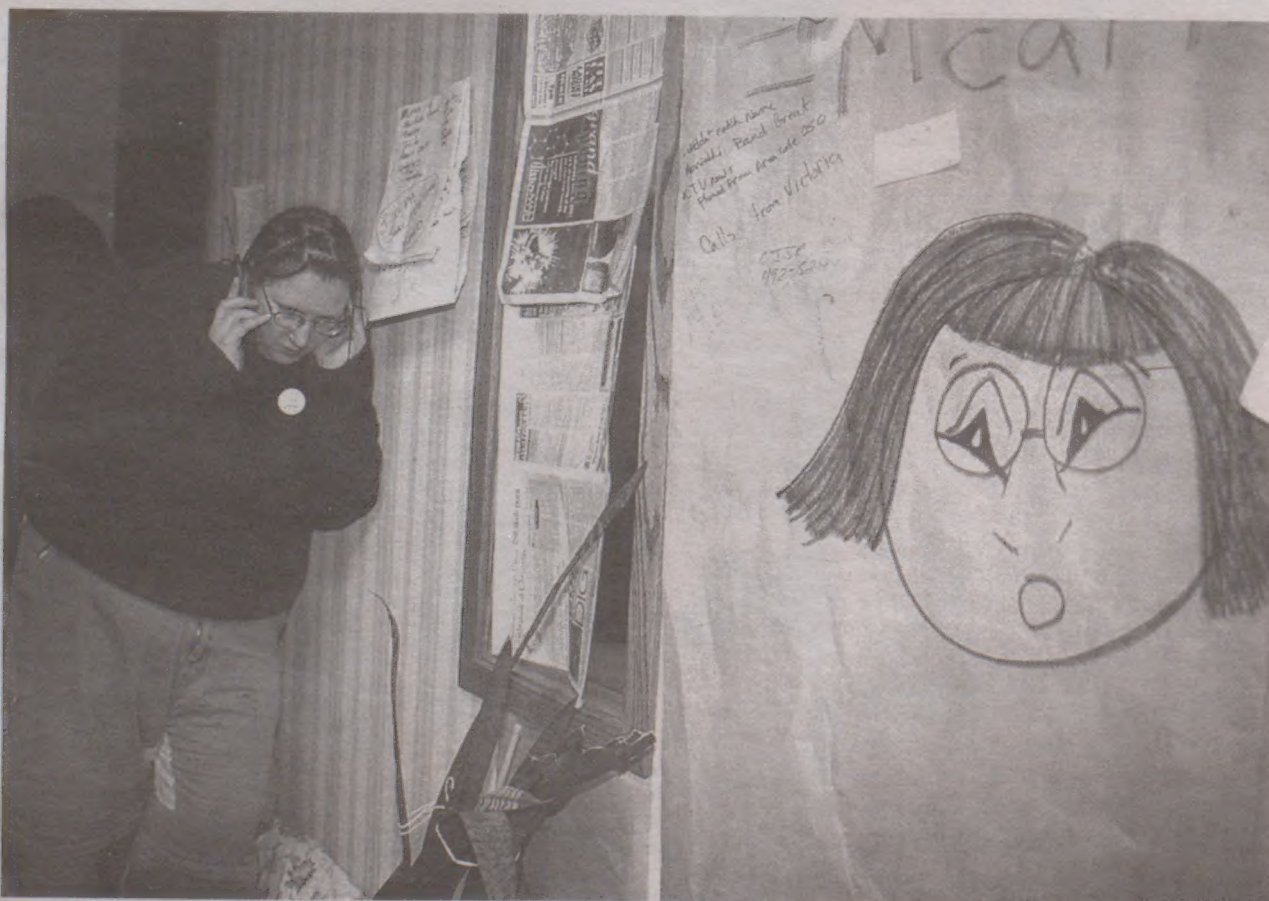
We need a lot more people like Len if we want to save our public essential services, our national sovereignty, our water, our



Len Douziech

resources, our own economy and our democracy. We need people who have a vision to see that just because the system is working for them right now, there is no guarantee that it will continue to do so. Public protestors tend to challenge and measure themselves in terms of risk taking. They express their convictions in terms of how willing they are to go to jail. I'm older and perhaps more cynical. The question I ask is rather, "How many hours are you willing to donate to your group?" I am far more impressed by the sheer number of events to which Len contributes his energy than by his willingness to spend a night in jail. Thank you Len for doing a really necessary job, really well. We hope you keep on doing it.

THERESA MCBRYAN



Len does this with such spontaneity, directness and good-natured enthusiasm that he stands out in groups that sometimes tend to self-absorption, and insularity, and who use their collective personal anger to create guilt.



the ABC's of the C's

The so-called Anti-Terrorism Act (Bill C-36), which was passed by the House of Commons on Nov 28th and passed through Senate on Dec 18th, combined with the upcoming Bill C-35 legislation will likely be problematic in many areas. Only some areas are covered here. Excerpts from Oxygen Smith, one of the 11 persons arrested, and from other sources follow.

Civil liberty advocates have severely criticized the Act and accompanying legislation (Bills C-35 and C-42), which give the government "extraordinary powers" and is overly broad in its definition of "terrorism." These acts could breed disturbing abuses of power that affect dissident political activities including demonstrations, the planning of demonstrations and the creation of critical mass protest blockades, among others. It removes court oversight of wiretapping, blocks citizen access to government information, and an accused person's right to actually see the evidence against them if they are accused of terrorism or "harboring a terrorist."

Not only does legislation to deal with criminal activity such as terrorism already exist, but we believe that police and intelligence agencies already have too much power, especially in light of the disturbing actions of police forces at the Quebec City Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) demonstrations. To date, the Minister of Justice has not offered even ONE concrete example that removing safeguards on expanded police powers and surveillance will keep Canadians safer.

While Bill C-36 was amended in response to public outcry, before being passed, the contentious aspects of Bill C-36 will be put back into place in Bill C-35. Naomi Klein, author of No Logo and Globe & Mail columnist, expresses how the bills work together:

"First, Bill C-35 defines 'internationally protected persons' as 'representatives of a foreign state that is a member of or participates in an international organization.' The idea is taken from the UN Convention granting diplomatic immunity to politicians attending UN conferences. But Bill C-35 expands the UN definition to include foreign visitors attending bilateral or multilateral meetings of any kind. That means delegates to a trade summit with China, an APEC summit, and yes, a G8 meeting. In a penstroke, these events will be placed behind a shield of diplomatic immunity."

"Next, C-36 steps in, defining interference with 'protected persons', including visiting dictators, as not just criminal acts but terrorists ones... (one's rights to legal representation and to remain silent are non-existent under Bill C-36)."

"To be clear, the question is not whether activists have the right to inconvenience conference delegates or push

against chain link fences. Under current laws, many protesters are already facing criminal charges for precisely these activities. The question is whether these are acts of terrorism, on legal par with hijacking planes and planting bombs."

The need to protect ourselves against terrorism is understandable. But civil liberties crackdowns do not prevent terrorist attacks, as the examples of the U.K.-Ireland and Israel-Palestine attacks demonstrate in abundance. Evidently, countries become targets of terrorism when they do not address international historical grievances. By sending troops in to help the U.S. kill thousands of innocent civilians in Afghanistan (to look for suspect fugitives) how is Canada preventing the creation of future terrorists?

Along with Bill C-42 that could soon pass, which gives the government the power to designate military zones, one wonders just what will happen to the most active of informed defenders of democracy attending large scale peaceful protests of the future.

All Canadians have a right to the civil liberties as stated in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms including the right to remain innocent until proven guilty.

Brothers and sisters in this country, it is time to "Get Up, Stand Up! Stand up for your rights!"

Now is the time to call your MP and Senators across the country to voice your demands for a public consultative process or debate before Bills C-35 and C-42 become law, and demand a much-needed clampdown on police media spinning and police power abuses.

"The constitution of Canada does not belong either to Parliament, or to the Legislatures; it belongs to the country and it is there that the citizens of the country will find the protection of the rights to which they are entitled" - Supreme Court of Canada A.G. of Nova Scotia vs A.G. of Canada, S.C.R. 1951 pp 32-33.

LEN DOUZIECH,

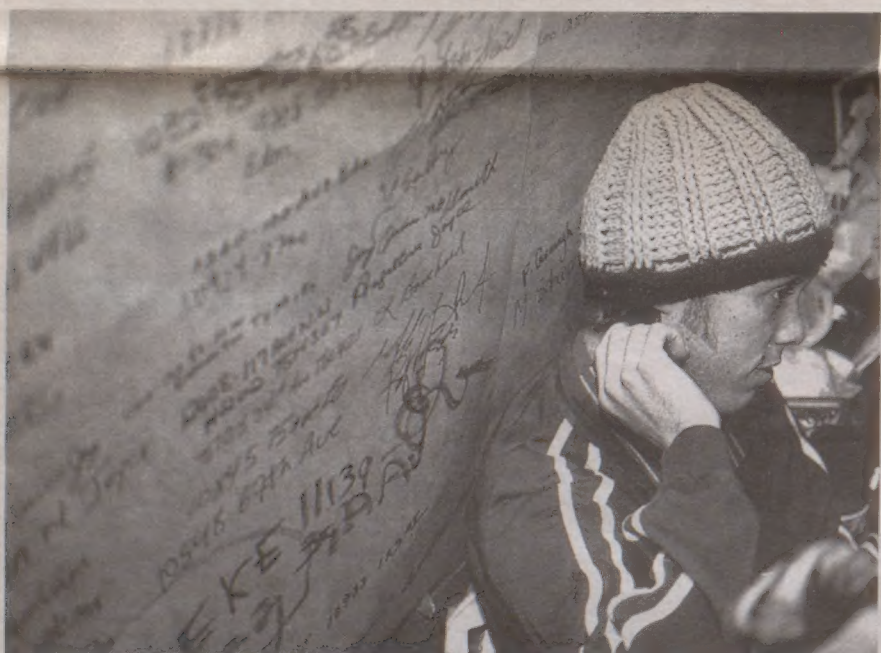
Member of the Council of Canadians,
Edmonton Chapter
780 945-9116

Do your family a favor for the future of democracy, and check the following websites:

Email list of Senators across Canada:
www.canadianliberty.bc.ca

Canadian Bar Association
http://www.cba.org/news/releases/2001_releases/2001-12-06_sunat2.asp

Naomi Klein's critique of Bill C-35:
www.rabble.ca/columnists_full.shtml?x=4704



C-35, C-36, C-42

Changing Ways



Part Three: After

"Then came the day when the pain of hanging on was greater than the pain of letting go."

Any guy who can go through the twelve weeks of the Changing Ways course and not be changed has to be a pretty tough nut to crack. Any guy who wants to make a change in his life, who wants to handle his relationships differently, has to come to grips with some basic realities: he is acting in an abusive manner, he is hurting himself and others, and he is in need of changing the way he handles relationships. Most guys who go through the whole course do face those realities. And they do let go.

Usually there is a lot to let go of—the negative influences and imaging they received during their childhood, the misogynist attitudes they developed through their adult lives, the damage they have done to others and to themselves in their relationships. It's a tall order, but the caring and compassionate environment in which the course is delivered goes a long way toward helping them

with the letting go process.

Having let go of old abusive patterns, negative attitudes, and destructive behavior is a big step in the right direction. An important part of the healing process, it can also leave a guy feeling pretty lost, too. He has to root into something new or he will slip back into old patterns, and you can bet that his family and friends are going to be watching to see if the changes he's claiming to have made are real. Chances are there's not going to be a lot of trust in them either. His spouse and children are going to be feeling a little unsettled. They've been dealing with him for a long time the way he was, and he may seem like a new person—not necessarily one they like. Also, the fact that he's more in touch with his feelings makes him more sensitive to criticism, which can come down on him pretty hard when people start responding negatively to his new behaviors.

That's where the ongoing support group comes in. It's an important piece of what makes Changing Ways work. Guys meet once a week to talk about the problems they encounter putting their new ways into practice. They talk about the good stuff too, and the meeting can be pretty upbeat. There is always the opportunity to walk out of the room feeling better than when you walked in.

Typically, a meeting starts with something called 'checking in'. Each guy gets three minutes to recap what's gone on for him since he was last in a meeting. For some, the three minutes isn't enough, because they have encountered a problem that needs talking about, and some positive direction to take it. Usually the counselor is flexible, reads the situation and gives the guy more time to talk it through. Sometimes, he just flags it as a problem to solve later. Always, other guys in the group are asked for feedback, because that's what a support group is all about.

The overall focus of the group is guys talking to guys about the challenges of living in a relationship that has changed because of changes they have made in their attitudes and behavior. Or talking about other changes in their lives, which could mean a relationship they were trying to save that isn't there anymore. Guys who came into the program hoping to save a relationship, only to have it end while they are changing, face a pretty major setback. That is why the focus is always on the guy and how he is handling his communications, his responses and his problems. There is always the temptation to push the problem off on someone else, or go into denial and say it's only a problem because someone else thinks it is.

One of the real comforts in being involved with the support group is it's a safe place to be. He can say anything he wants, be as free with his emotions as he needs to be, blow off some steam, whatever he likes, and nobody is going to think the worse of him. He can expect some pretty direct feedback about it, and that's a good thing too. He can laugh or cry or yell, and nobody is going to stop him. And what happens there stays there. Confidentiality is respected at all times. He gets to look at something he did through several pairs of eyes, and better still, (if he's honest) feel the impact of whatever it was. Often at that point the tears flow and everything gets real. And somebody's there with a handshake, or even a hug, and the guy knows it's the action that's being looked at, not the guy who did it. After all that, the group gets down to business with problem solving so that the next time a "button pushing" situation comes up, he won't let his buttons get pushed. He's prepared to be "response-able" and deal with whatever it is straight up—with a time out, "ten count", or maybe, as one guy puts it "gently easing" into that secret place where he knows he's "eternally O.K."

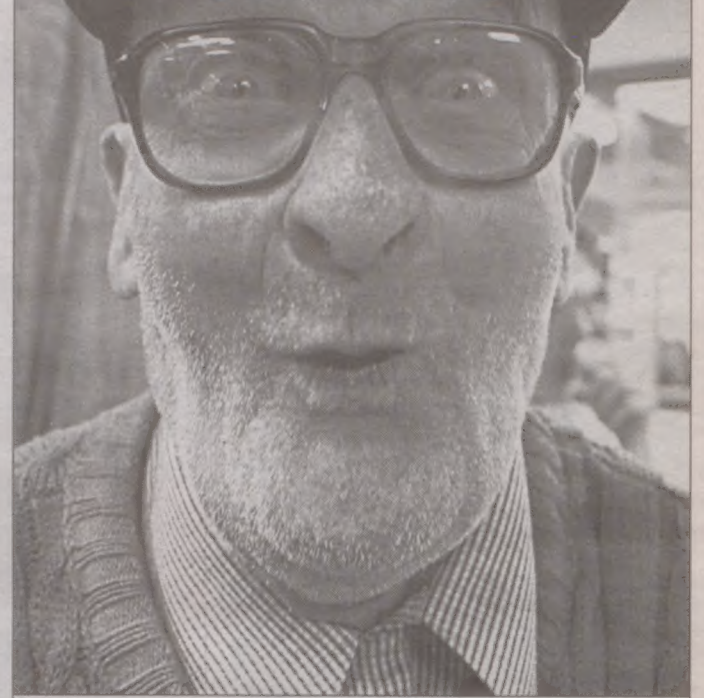
Finally, each guy in the group has the opportunity to come to grips with the knowledge that "the only person we can change is ourselves".

What a guy gets out of being involved with Changing Ways depends a great deal on what he puts into it. From what I have seen, most put their total commitment into it and truly believe that, as Ghandi said, "We have to become the change we want to see".

JAKE FRIEDMAN

If you believe that you can support this kind of change in a financial way, or as a volunteer, please do so. If you just want to know more about the program, or know someone who could be helped by it and don't know how to proceed, why don't you pick up the phone and call 439-4635.

Support Our Voice



Providing poor men and women with a chance to take control of their lives is the purpose of **Our Voice**. For seven years now we have given opportunities to more than 2000 people in Edmonton who have found themselves living in poverty.

Our Voice is a project of Bissell Centre and was founded in 1994 to empower people who were homeless or at risk of becoming so, as they work toward gainful employment and self-sufficiency. With more than a seven-year history, the **Our Voice** organization has gained notoriety for honest news reporting and our unique approach to addressing poverty.

Yes, I would like to contribute to Our Voice!

Our Voice has come a long way but needs more to be done and we cannot do it without you. Your tax-deductible financial contribution will allow us to continue our commitment of helping the homeless and the unemployed transition into gainful employment.

Won't you please take a minute and send in your contribution today? Your giving and supportive spirit will not go unrecognized.

Please send a cheque to:

Our Voice 10527-96 Street
Edmonton AB. T5H 2H6

Enclosed is a tax-deductible donation for
\$100.00 ___ \$75.00 ___ \$50.0 ___ Other _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Organization (if any): _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Your money will go toward:

- Helping with the printing costs of **Our Voice**.
- Computer and writing training for our vendors.
- Continued support and empowerment services for vendors.

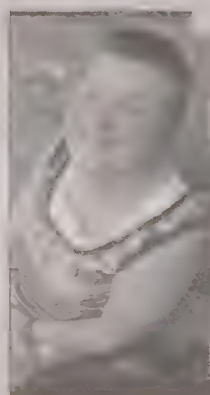
A New Year!

Start your year off right with:

2002 Our Voice Calendar from your local OV vendor. Calendars are also available at Greenwood's (II) and at the Bissell Centre.

Only \$10 for photographic and literary inspiration.

For more info phone Ron @ 423-2285 Ext. 139



January

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human
being



(Minimum number of baboons forced to smoke crack in a 1989 study testing the efficacy of cigarettes as a drug delivery device : 3)



Mekim Na Savvy: Bougainville - Small Nation, Big Message

It is rare that I wax lyrical about a film. But the independently produced documentary, *An Evergreen Island*, about Bougainville, a South Pacific island that survived nine years with little assistance from the outside world has left a big impression on me.

Made by Australian filmmakers Fabio Cavadini and Mandy King, it should resonate with all who struggle against the power of global capital. With all who are concerned about genuine alternatives to the global free market economy. With all who believe that it is impossible to exist without being beholden to products of the transnationals. And all of us who believe that we can.

An *Evergreen Island* has become a permanent fixture in my luggage as I have been on the road in North America and Asia since September. The people to whom I have shown it seem to have been as inspired by it as I was when I first saw it a few months ago.

Bougainville is part of the Solomon Islands archipelago, and lies about 700 kilometers east of Papua New Guinea. Like so many other lands and peoples, it is the victim of arbitrary boundary setting by former colonial rulers during their scrambles to control and exploit the Pacific.

Bougainvilleans neither accepted Australian colonial rule nor incorporation into Papua New Guinea when it became independent in September

1975. In the early 1970s, demands for a referendum to give the people of Bougainville the right to genuinely determine their own future were denied. Meanwhile, the island was being ravaged by one of the world's most rapacious transnational corporations.

On their own, the people of Bougainville took on one of the world's biggest mining companies, and a Papua New Guinea government, backed by Australia, which was desperate to get the mineral-rich island back in its grasp - and won. Conzinc Rio Tinto of Australia had located a huge copper-ore deposit in the Panguna valley in 1965. Prospecting had been strongly opposed by the local landowners whose customary title to the land was denied by the Australia and Papua New Guinea administrations in the name of "development".

Women, the true custodians of the land on Bougainville, were at the forefront of early protests against the mining, and the backbone of the subsequent struggles and grassroots initiatives to rebuild their communities.

In 1972 through its subsidiary, Bougainville Copper Party Limited, CRA began commercial production - a hugely successful and profitable operation from the standpoint of the company and for Papua New Guinea, but devastating for the people, lands and rivers of Bougainville. In 1987 Philip Hughes, Head of Environment Science at the University of Papua New Guinea described Panguna as "an economic godsend - and an environmental disaster."

Villagers were forced to relocate because of the mine tearing into the heart of their motherland. Over a billion tonnes of poisonous tailings were dumped in the Jaba and Kawerong rivers. River fish and animals, as well as marine life near the coast were poisoned, died, or disappeared, along with forests and food gardens.

The mine created a huge crater, half a kilometer deep and two kilometers wide. Green mountains turned to barren rock. The Jaba river valley became a moonscape. Local communities were showered in dust containing toxic heavy metals and drank from polluted water.

After 17 years of patient petitions and lobbying to seek better environmental controls, a fairer deal with transnationals and the PNG government, the people of Bougainville closed the mine. The Bougainville Revolutionary Army blew up the power supply to the mine. From May 1989 until the present it has stayed shut.

An *Evergreen Island* is a bittersweet film. One cannot watch this documentary and forget the scale of the suffering in Bougainville, where between 15-20,000 people - out of a total population of around 200,000 - died during the years of war, many from preventable diseases like TB, whooping cough and malaria, or during childbirth.

When Papua New Guinea sent its soldiers in to shoot to kill, and to try to reopen the mine, the pro-independence Bougainville Revolutionary Army formed to defend the land and the people.

In April 1990 the Papua New Guinea government imposed a land, sea and military blockade around Bougainville. It aimed to make life even harder for Bougainvilleans so that they would turn against the pro-independence BRA and the Panguna mine could reopen.

All government and social services were suspended; schools closed and medical staff left Bougainville. For nine years, the blockade kept journalists out, along with food, medical supplies, fuel and humanitarian assistance. The film documents how the people of Bougainville survived, rebuilt and maintained their communities.

Without modern weapons, the BRA built guns from water pipes, which could fire more quickly than the automatic weapons of the PNG Defense Force. As the noose of the blockade closed in around the island, Australian-supplied Iroquois helicopter gun ships strafed villages, and the Australian-supported and armed PNGDF troops attacked, tortured and killed people and torched villages on Bougainville.

But in the BRA-controlled areas (over 80% of the Bougainville mainland) communities showed incredible resourcefulness, determination and ingenuity in fashioning solutions to complex problems from local materials and nature itself. They built

and maintained indigenous health and education services without outside assistance.

While the seriously ill could take the chance of being ferried at dusk across the blockade in small boats to hospital in the Solomon Islands, bush medicine - the traditional knowledge and practice of indigenous healing underwent a revival in the absence of medical supplies and health professionals.

A system of schools and training colleges were set up. Houses, schools and clinics were built from local timbers, vines and foliage. Nails were made from cutting up cyclone fencing. In Pidgin, local chiefs dubbed this indigenous inventiveness *mekim na savvy*, or learning by doing.

Without diesel, Bougainvilleans discovered a new, truly revolutionary use for coconuts. Coconut oil was fermented in upturned fridges discarded at the beginning of the crisis, boiled and used as fuel to run generators and the specially adapted four wheel drives needed to cross the rugged terrain.

Young people driven from their studies by the crisis combined basic technical know-how, indigenous knowledge and sheer genius to cannibalize available bits of machinery like the gearbox of a truck to create electric power from small home-made hydro installations on the fast-flowing rivers of their lands.

The abandoned mine became a hardware supermarket for spare parts, which were salvaged, carried across the island, and put to new uses. Solar power was harnessed to charge batteries for two-way radios and satellite phones - an important link with the outside world. As one Bougainvillean woman comments at the beginning of the film:

The war was like a university - it made us creative. We thought for ourselves and we discovered alternative ways to survive.

This film is more than just a tale of survival on

a troubled tropical island paradise. It is a story about community - and self-determination. After many years, there is finally some light at the end of a long tunnel for the Bougainville people in their struggle. Communities across Bougainville are confronting the painful task of reconciling with communities and individuals whom they treated as enemies during the war.

In late August, after three years of an often fragile ceasefire between the BRA and the PNGDI an agreement was signed which will deliver a greater amount of autonomy to Bougainville. This includes a disarmament agreement, the drawing up of a new Bougainville constitution, and an eventual referendum on full independence. In December legislation is due to go before Papua New Guinea's Parliament to make the constitutional amendments necessary to implement the peace and autonomy agreement.

Maybe there is light at the end of the tunnel for the rest of us, too.

For many years now we have been lied to. The TINA myth. There Is No Alternative. Embrace the free market - or perish. Buy our products - or miss out. Let us destroy your lands and rivers for profit - or else. Watch this film. There are alternatives.

There are no blueprints. But if we can harness just some of the same courage, resourcefulness and vision as the people of Bougainville we would be well on the way to a brighter future. Perhaps we need a global dose of *mekim na savvy*.

AZIZ CHOUDRY
December 11 2001

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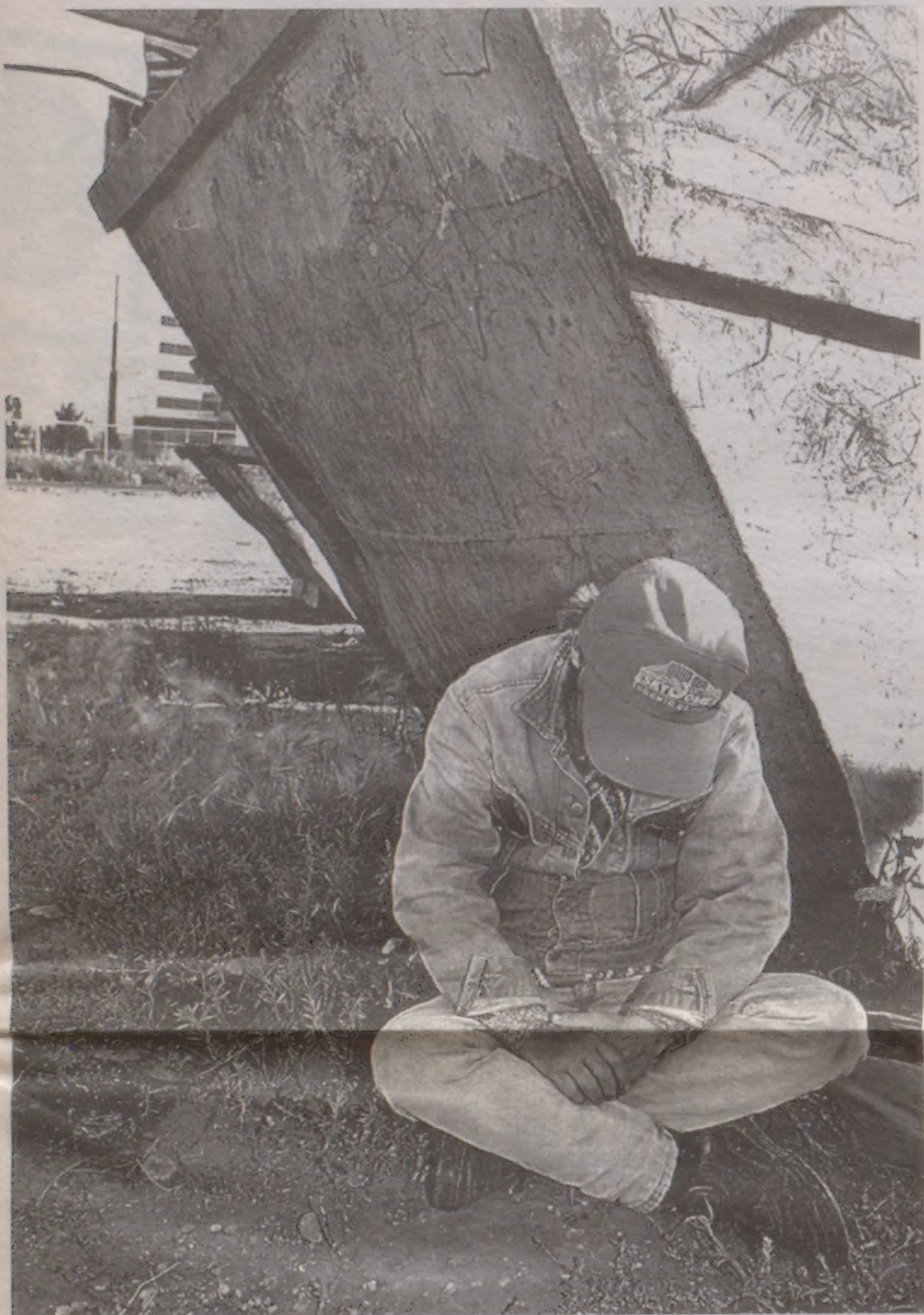


Photo: P. de Vos, Jr.

Nobody's Ever Truly Homeless

Homelessness is so often thought to be a disgrace, especially at this time of year when families gather to celebrate the holidays. Instead of feeling disgrace, we can remember that One came long ago and He too was homeless. Wise men traveled far to see Him and to honour Him with gifts. Even now He returns the honour to those who honour Him.

Many of us have felt alone, rejected and misunderstood. It hurts, especially when there are people around who we want to be close to. I have had the good fortune to have people in my life who were willing to open heart and home to me, putting up with my ways, and it's only because they are there, that I'm able to write at all. As I write this, I'm thinking of one who has helped me along so many times, always helping me get back to where I belong. Because of the inspiration she has been to me, I have this poem to share, from my learning through aboriginal teachings ... to let you know that not one of us is ever homeless if we can find inside ourselves our own sacred place that no one can ever profane.

A Sacred Place

Lake Peaceful
Sparkling Waters
Dancing Prancing
Tall Pines Guarding
Willows Whispering.

Sunshine Warm
Smiling
Rocks Reflecting
Shoreline Shifting
Breezes Gently Lifting
Eagle Sunward Soaring.

Crow's Song Teaching
His Thanks Giving
Seeing Listening

Sensing
In This Good Place
Four Directions Meeting

Nurture Healing
Revealing
My Thanks Giving
My Spirit Dancing
Like A Feather
In The Wind.

- Hai Hai -
JAKE FRIESEN

Respect

The world has changed since I sobered up and I actually enjoy life as the Creator meant for me to enjoy. I started to relearn my culture and the one thing I learned was no matter who you are we are created the same in the Creator's eyes. I have been writing for this great paper for a year now and a vendor for a little longer.

Respect is the one thing that seems to have vanished in our society and we must try to get it back. I have seen people back stab people and turn around and be nice to that person. I was one of those people and I didn't care about what I was doing to others. I would talk about you when you weren't around and I would poison people's minds so they would hate you. Then I would puff out my chest and say, 'look at me—I am great'. The only great thing about me was looking like a fool and destroying people's lives. I could never be trusted with secrets because I would use them to destroy you and all I did was laugh in your face. When I heard someone talk about me I would go out and destroy that person and not care about his feelings. When I had booze in me I would say things to people and not care

about them. I really thought that if I said things about people they would hate me forever. A lot of those people have come to me and forgiven me. There are some out there who still hate me and it is up to them to forgive me. I am really trying hard to forgive myself and be more respectful. Rumors have hurt a lot of people and it is my responsibility that they stop with me.

Respect is the one thing that showed me to be more open and talk to the person I have a problem with. Respect has also shown me to love and understand people more. To be respectful to someone is a way of honoring that person and being there in time of need. I have been honored with many wonderful friends who showed and gave me the respect I so greatly needed. The only way I got that was by way of showing people I can change for the good. The only way to gain respect is by earning it and respecting the gift that was given to me. You cannot buy respect or beat people up to get it. You have to earn it and it must come from your heart or it means nothing. The one thing about respect is that the Creator gives a lot and we don't show any in return.

This is to people that are part of my life and those who aren't: thanks for showing me that I can respect my self and honor you as a friend.

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Photo: PF de Vos, Jr.

The Gibson Story

They say lightning never strikes twice in the same place. As far as Ele Gibson is concerned that myth is not her reality. Life's lightning has hit twice close to home. Once, when she experienced a tragic divorce that left her feeling uncertain about the future and as if her life had come to an abrupt end. Then, through the termination of her job as a shipper and receiver—another loss that hurt her emotionally.

Ele Gibson, a Scottish immigrant, came to Canada from Scotland in 1981. She was married with two children, a son, aged 2, and a daughter who was five months old.

She was married to an engineer who she helped put through school. Ele says, "I wasn't in the kind of relationship I wanted to be in. I wasn't doing what I wanted to do. I had no sense of fulfilment whatsoever. The relationship was very much one where it was expected that I would be home all the time to look after the children and that my life would revolve around my husband. He basically wanted me to be a certain type of person."

Now divorced, Ele was undecided about her future. Although she was a certified school teacher in Scotland, she realized she lacked the proper qualifications under Canadian teaching standards. She managed to support herself and her two kids by working as a shipper receiver for a lumberyard. Then in 1987, a friend of hers who was employed at the Bissell Centre, asked Ele to volunteer her time sorting Christmas gifts. Ele felt that a newer challenge might

the people's columnist

lead to better opportunities. She was also asked to volunteer during a Bissell New Year's Eve dinner in January of 1988.

Working with people living in poverty had an impact on Ele. "I started volunteering every Sunday night and realized it was very different than the way my mother had described things to me. My mother was a bit of a social climber and used to get me to cross the road to avoid people she thought were inappropriate for me to be mixing with. I found that people are people, no matter who they are, where they come from, or what their background."

Life's lightning would strike again for the second time in Ele's life. She was laid-off from her full-time job at the lumberyard. Once again she was uncertain of her future. Little did she realize that success was right around the corner.

The friend who had found Ele volunteer employment at the Bissell Centre was leaving her position and suggested Ele apply for her position as a public relations coordinator.

Her experience as a volunteer at the Bissell Centre, as well as her knowledge of the functions of the centre, made her the right person for the position.

"I was really lucky. Under normal circumstances I probably wouldn't have been hired, because I didn't have the proper qualifications, but they needed someone quickly. They were moving buildings and there were events and media relations involved in this. They needed someone that knew the agency and had the speed to deal with that quickly and gave me a shot."

Today, as content as she's ever been, Ele is employed as the Manager of Resource Development at the Bissell Centre.

JOHN ZAPANTIS



Photo: John Zapantis

The New Democrat Opposition

Wishing you all the best
in the New Year!



Raj Pannu, MLA
Edmonton Strathcona
Leader, New Democrat
Opposition

Brian Mason, MLA
Edmonton Highlands



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citizen of
the month

dianne swabey

Dianne Swabey has lived in Edmonton all her life. She has two children and one grandchild. She likes to help out in the community and has worked the past two years at Breemar School which provides education for over 160 young mothers and mothers-to-be. The school has a daycare, a job-finding group called Selection and a clothing room that Dianne looks after. It provides used infant clothes and maternity wear. This year marks the 30th anniversary of operation.

The Terra Foundation administers all the programs. Dianne's other volunteer efforts include eight years working with The Festival of Trees

and collecting for the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

Dianne says she gets enjoyment out of seeing the benefits people derive as a result of her effort. Her message for others is, "If you have a little time, some special skill, don't hesitate to offer your service. Volunteers are always in need and it can only help to make for a better community."

Dianne, you're well deserving of this recognition. I wish you all the best in the future.

CEC GARRIN

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vendor of
the month

Our Voice veteran vendor Linda Dumont is a leader and inspiration to her Our Voice colleagues.

Born in Edmonton and raised on a farm near Sunnyside, Alberta, Linda is the daughter of a Danish farmer and fur-trapper. Her Ukrainian mother worked as a housewife while raising the family's four children.

Her broad creative knowledge in many areas of the literary field as well as the arts is expressed through writing, photography, poetry, painting, sketching and cartooning.

In July of 1993, while serving food to inner-city people at the Christ Love Ministry in Edmonton, Linda was approached by an Our Voice vendor who encouraged her to sell Our Voice, then known as Vancouver Spare Change Newspaper. Shortly after that Linda officially became a vendor.

Linda started writing for Our Voice in April of 1994. An abusive relationship that ended in divorce in 1989 led Linda to write. She says, "Well initially I wrote personal stories because I had been in a very abusive marriage...that was very healing for me, but I published them under an assumed name. It still sort of sets me free."

Linda's broad knowledge of personal and social issues encouraged her to write for other local and regional newspapers.

Linda has been the editor of the Boyle McCauley News since December 1998, and a writer for the same paper since 1989.

Linda, a champion poet, has won many categories in the Songs of the Street poetry contests I, II, and III, and published in the anthologies of the same name. Linda also edited Songs of the Street IV.

The talented writer and winning poet has also had success as an entertaining cartoonist. Her first cartoon series, the longest running of all Our Voice cartoon series 'Soupline Bob' is a depiction of real-life off-the-wall people struggling to survive in the inner city. The series ran successfully for four years and was later published as a book in the summer of 2000.

Her second cartoon series 'Over Kill' was inspired by her observations of the cockroaches, which often invaded her previous dwellings, like brave little warriors. This series ran for a two-year period.

Linda has also had the pleasure of having two of her own poetry anthologies published by the Songs of the Street: 'Shattered Rainbows' and 'Eclipse'. Each book sold for \$5 and was sold by Our Voice vendors.

You can find our talented lady of newsprint vending at her favorite and only location, the Downtown Farmer's Market, 102 Ave and 97 St. in Edmonton.

JOHN ZAPANTIS



Photo: John Zapantis

Reg Taylor

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